

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 170602

FOL REPEAT PARIS 19752 ACTION SECSTATE INFO TEL AVIV 7 JUL.

QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS

SUBJECT: AIR FRANCE HIJACKING

REF: STATE 167095

1. WE DO NOT BELIEVE IT ADVISABLE TO TRY TO DEBRIEF CAPTAIN BACOS OR OTHER MEMBERS OF THE AIR FRANCE CREW DIRECTLY, AND WE DOUBT THAT THEY WOULD BE PERMITTED TO DO SO BY AIR FRANCE AND THE GOF. LE MONDE OF JULY 6 QUOTES THE "MECHANICS OFFICER" OF THE AIRBUS, SPEAKING IN THE NAME OF THE CREW, AS THANKING PRESIDENT IDI AMIN DADA "FOR HIS CONSTANT CARE TO ASSURE OUR SECURITY, OUR MATERIAL COMFORT AND SANITATION". LE MONDE OF JULY 7 GIVES THE CAPTAIN'S ACCOUNT IN WHICH HE SAID HE HAD THE MECHANICS OFFICER READ THE CREW STATEMENT BECAUSE HE HAD LOST HIS VOICE. HE SAID FURTHER, "THE UGANDAN AUTHORITIES MADE EFFORTS TO ASSURE TO THE HOSTAGES DECENT MATERIAL CONDITIONS. IT WAS NOT A CONFIDENTIAL

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QUESTION OF ANYTHING ELSE".

2. DEPARTMENT'S ATTENTION DIRECTED TO AFP-093 OF JULY 7 FROM PARIS WHICH CONTAINS THE HIGHLIGHTS OF A PRESS CONFERENCE GIVEN THE SAME DAY AT AIR FRANCE HEADQUARTERS BY BACOS AND OTHER MEMBERS OF THE AIRBUS CREW. CONCERNING UGANDAN INVOLVEMENT, BACOS SAID THAT AFTER THE PLANE'S STOP AT BENGHAZI, THE HIJACKERS INSTRUCTED THE PILOTS TO PREPARE FOR A FLIGHT OF 2000 NAUTICAL MILES, WITHOUT INDICATING DESTINATION. THE PILOTS KNEW ONLY ONE AND A HALF HOURS BEFORE THEIR ARRIVAL THAT KAMPALA WAS THEIR DESTINATION. BACOS WAS THEN AUTHORIZED TO MAKE RADIO CONTACT WITH ANOTHER PLANE IN FLIGHT BELONGING TO EAST AFRICAN AIRLINES TO RECEIVE INFORMATION ON LANDING CONDITION AT ENTEBBE. THE PLANE LANDED THERE AT 04:30 HOURS LOCAL, AND FOR AN HOUR, ON INSTRUCTIONS FROM THE CONTROL TOWER, TAXIED ON THE LANDING STRIP. "IT APPEARED THAT A CERTAIN CONFUSION WAS THE BASIS FOR THE CONTRADICTORY ORDERS GIVEN BY THE CONTROL TOWER WHICH CAUSED THIS HOUR-LONG PROMENADE."

3. BACOS SAID THE PLANE WAS FINALLY AUTHORIZED TO STOP AT THE END OF THE STRIP. ABOUT ONE O'CLOCK, ORDERS WERE GIVEN TO START THE MOTORS AND TO MOVE THE PLANE NEAR THE OLD TERMINAL ABOUT 500 METERS AWAY. PRESIDENT AMIN, SURROUNDED BY SOLDIERS,

WAS STANDING BEFORE THE TERMINAL. TWO MEN, APPARENTLY PALESTINIANS, HAD THE PASSENGERS DISEMBARK AND LED THEM TO THE TERMINAL.

4. ACCORDING TO THE CREW, CONTINUES THE AFP ITEM, THREE OTHER PALESTINIANS JOINED THE FOUR PIRATES WHO HAD HIJACKED THE PLANE AND PARTICIPATED IN GUARDING THE HOSTAGES. TWO OTHER MEN, NOT IDENTIFIED BY THE CREW, WENT BACK AND FORTH BUT DID NOT PARTICIPATE IN GUARDING. AT NO TIME DID UGANDAN TROOPS ENTER THE TERMINAL WAITING ROOM; THEY WERE STATIONED AT SOME DISTANCE FROM IT AND CONSTITUTED A SORT OF SECURITY CORDON. AMIN VISITED THE HOSTAGES SEVERAL

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TIMES AND TOLD THEM THAT HE WAS BUSY WORKING FOR THEM AND HAD MADE CONTACTS WITH DIFFERENT GOVERNMENTS TO LIBERATE THEM.

5. COMMENT: IT SEEMS CLEAR THAT AIR FRANCE AND THE GOF DO NOT WISH FURTHER TO COMPLICATE THEIR RELATIONS WITH ARAB COUNTRIES AND PARTICULARLY AMIN AND WILL THEREFORE DOWNPLAY ANY ASPECT OF CLEAR

LINKAGE OF UGANDANS WITH THE HIJACKERS. RECOVERY OF
THE PLANE IS NO DOUBT OF HIGHER PRIORITY THAN FURTHER
TESTIMONY SHOWING AMIN'S SUPPORT FOR THE HIJACKERS,
WHICH IS PRETTY GENERALLY ASSUMED HERE WHERE MUCH OF
THE EVIDENCE CITED IN STATE 167345 HAS BEEN REPORTED
BY THE MEDIA.
RUSH

UNQUOTE KISSINGER

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